

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 28, 2016

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2099

Introduced by Assembly Member Mark Stone

February 17, 2016

An act to add Chapter 16 (commencing with Section 18997) to Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AB 2099, as amended, Mark Stone. Safe drinking water ~~assistance program~~ *assistance*.

Existing law provides for financial and food assistance benefits to needy Californians, including, among other programs, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program and CalFresh, under which each county provides for financial and food assistance benefits to qualified individuals who meet specified eligibility criteria. Existing law, administered by the State Department of Social Services, provides for the establishment of a statewide electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system for the purpose of providing those financial and food assistance benefits. Existing law authorizes a county to deliver CalFresh benefits and, upon election by the county, CalWORKs benefits through the use of an EBT system.

This bill would require the State Department of Social Services to establish and administer a ~~safe drinking water assistance program to provide cash benefits~~ *process to deliver interim drinking water assistance benefits* to low-income households, as defined, with inadequate access to safe drinking water ~~so that they may obtain safe drinking water~~. The bill would specify that eligible low-income

households include, but are not limited to, households ~~in a disadvantaged community, in disadvantaged communities, served by noncompliant small water systems, households located in communities deemed eligible~~ for interim emergency drinking water benefits from the State Water Resources Control Board, and households whose private wells have ~~gone dry or become contaminated, active outages or water supply problems,~~ as specified. The bill would require that the ~~program process~~ be funded with existing *emergency drought response* resources *allocated for interim water assistance* and would require the department, in consultation with other specified state agencies, to identify existing ~~resources for the program.~~ *resources*. The bill would require the department to deliver the ~~cash~~ benefits through the EBT system. The bill would also make relating findings and declarations.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares *all of the*
- 2 *following:*
- 3 (a) The electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system ~~is an electronic~~
- 4 ~~system that~~ has operated statewide in California since 2004 ~~that~~
- 5 ~~allows as an effective and efficient method to issue government~~
- 6 ~~benefits to be transferred directly to recipients, similar to a bank~~
- 7 ~~debit card, to provide a way to spend benefits at retailers.~~
- 8 *recipients.*
- 9 (b) Research has shown that the use of EBT ~~cards~~ has many
- 10 advantages for delivering public benefits. For recipients, EBT
- 11 offers greater convenience, improved security, and reduced
- 12 stigmatization. For state governments, EBT provides cost and time
- 13 savings, improves operational efficiencies, and promotes
- 14 accountability while stimulating local economies.
- 15 (c) EBT has been deemed an effective and responsive
- 16 mechanism for quickly delivering assistance to people recovering
- 17 from natural disasters.
- 18 (d) The Legislature and the Governor established The Human
- 19 Right to Water *policy* in 2013, which established the policy of the
- 20 state that every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable,
- 21 and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking,
- 22 and sanitary purposes.

(e) Despite a history of proactive water policies, California residents still face formidable challenges as the drought continues to exacerbate water quality issues for disadvantaged communities who disproportionately bear the health and financial impacts of inadequate access to safe water.

(f) Significant barriers to water access exist for marginalized Californians who are forced to choose between drinking water and expending scarce resources to pay for clean water.

(g) In 2014, more than 1 million Californians faced water safety violations that made water unsafe to drink.

(h) As the drought enters its fifth year, more than 2,000 domestic wells have gone dry in the Central Valley, affecting tens of thousands of people. Many small communities face chronic water quality problems. Almost 400 small rural water systems and schools are unable to provide safe drinking water.

(i) In response to these challenges, the Governor and the Legislature have established or proposed new emergency drinking water supports to assist these households.

(j) Recognizing this, it is the intent of the Legislature to utilize the existing EBT system to deliver appropriate emergency water benefits to disadvantaged households in an efficient and effective manner.

SEC. 2. Chapter 16 (commencing with Section 18997) is added to Part 6 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

CHAPTER 16. SAFE DRINKING WATER ASSISTANCE ~~PROGRAM~~

18997. (a) The State Department of Social Services shall establish and administer a ~~safe process to deliver interim emergency drinking water assistance program to provide cash~~ benefits to low-income households with inadequate access to safe drinking water ~~so that they may obtain safe drinking water~~. Low-income households eligible ~~for program to receive these~~ benefits include, but are not limited to, all of the following:

(a)

(1) Households *served by noncompliant small water systems in disadvantaged communities, as defined in Section 79505.5 of the Water Code. Code, as determined by residence ZIP Code.*

(b)

(2) Households *located in communities deemed* eligible for interim emergency drinking water benefits under the State Water Resources Control ~~Board~~ *Board, as determined by residence ZIP Code.*

~~(e)~~

(3) Households whose private wells have ~~gone dry or become contaminated,~~ *active outages or water supply problems,* as determined by the ~~State Water Resources Control Board.~~ *Department of Water Resources.*

(b) A household shall become ineligible to receive these benefits once its water system is deemed compliant by the State Water Resources Control Board or its well supply problem is deemed resolved by the Department of Water Resources.

18997.5. (a) ~~To~~ *The State Department of Social Services shall utilize a computerized data-matching system using existing databases from the department, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the Department of Water Resources.*

(b) *To* the extent allowable under federal law, the department shall deliver the ~~cash~~ benefits provided pursuant to this chapter through the electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system created under Section 10072. The distribution of the ~~cash~~ benefits shall comply with any federal *and state* laws and regulations governing electronic benefits.

~~(b)~~

(c) ~~The program~~ *process* shall comply with privacy and confidentiality procedures consistent with all applicable state and federal law.

18998. ~~The program~~ *process* shall be funded from existing ~~resources.~~ *emergency drought response resources allocated for interim water assistance.* ~~The department~~ *State Department of Social Services* shall, in consultation with the Office of Emergency Services, the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, and other relevant agencies, identify existing ~~resources for the program.~~ *resources.*

18998.5. For the purpose of this chapter, “low-income household” means a household ~~with income that is equal to or no greater than 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline level. For a one-person household, program eligibility shall be based on two-person household guideline levels.~~ *determined to be*

1 *low-income through participation in any of the following*
2 *means-tested public assistance programs:*

3 *(a) A public assistance program for which the Office of Systems*
4 *Integration implements a statewide automated welfare system, as*
5 *specified in Section 10823, including CalWORKs, CalFresh,*
6 *Medi-Cal, and the refugee program.*

7 *(b) Any other public assistance program, including the*
8 *California Food Assistance Program, Cash Assistance for*
9 *Immigrants, Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary*
10 *Payment (SSI/SSP), and General Relief or General Assistance.*

11 *18998.6. Benefits provided under this chapter shall be in*
12 *addition to benefits provided under Chapter 2 (commencing with*
13 *Section 11200) of Part 3, and shall not be considered as income*
14 *or resources for any program established under this code.*